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## IRISH BIBLICAL STUDIES

Volume 15, April 1993

### Contents

C. E. B., Cranfield,	<b>Has the Old Testament a place in the Christian Life? A Response to Professor Westerholm.</b>	50-62
E. Best,	<b>Sermon for St Mark's Day</b>	63-71
A. J. Weir,	<b>Church Government</b>	72-83
D. J. Templeton	<b>Sssh! — Silence in Worship</b>	84-88

### Book Reviews

David Buttrick, <i>The Mystery and the Passion: A Homiletic Reading of the Gospel Traditions</i> , (Denis Campbell); David Noel Freedman (Editor in Chief), <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , vol 1-6, (J. C. McCullough).	89-92
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## **Has the Old Testament Law a Place in the Christian Life? A Response to Professor Westerholm.**

**Rev. Prof. C. E. B. Cranfield**

Stephen Westerholm's *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters*<sup>1</sup> has had an exceptionally enthusiastic welcome, and is undoubtedly a very important book. Not surprisingly it has already proved influential, and it seems likely that it will have a widespread influence for a good many years to come. Because this is so, it is especially desirable that its argumentation should be subjected to adequate scrutiny. The purpose of this article is to examine just one chapter in detail, the one entitled 'The Law and Christian Behaviour' (Chapter X). This chapter is selected for examination because the question, to which it seeks to give a definitive answer, namely, whether or not the Old Testament law has a place in the Christian life, is, I believe, a matter of vital importance for the health and integrity of the Church.

### **I**

Westerholm's contention is that Paul saw no continuing role for the law in the life of Christians. At the beginning of the chapter he argues that Paul would hardly have been charged with encouraging sin, as Rom 3.8; 6.1,15 imply that he was, had his position been simply either 'that the law's curse has been removed, though its precepts must be followed, or that the moral law stands, though the ritual law has been done away with' (p.199). The fact that such a charge could be laid against him with some plausibility must mean, Westerholm suggests, that he went farther than this and denied the Mosaic law any place in the Christian's life. But this argument lacks cogency. Paul's teaching on justification by faith would surely have been likely to be misunderstood as encouragement to sin, however much it was accompanied by exhortation to obey the commands of the law.

Westerholm goes on to try to establish five positions. The first is: 'That the ethical behaviour which Paul expects of believers

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<sup>1</sup> Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1988.

corresponds in content to the moral demands of the Mosaic code cannot be used to argue the abiding validity of the law'. With regard to this, it must, I think, be admitted that the overlap in content between Paul's moral teaching and the moral demands of the Mosaic law does not in itself prove that Paul regarded the law as still authoritative for Christians; but it is thoroughly consistent with the assumption that he did.

The second position which Westerholm seeks to establish is that 'Paul's statements that Christians "fulfil" the law are... an inadequate base for arguing that Christians are obligated to adhere to its precepts' (p.199). He maintains that, when Paul speaks of Christians' fulfilling the law (he refers to Rom 8.4; 13.8-10 and Gal 5.14), he 'is describing, not prescribing, Christian behaviour' (p.201). According to Westerholm, what Paul is doing is not indicating the duty of Christians to try to fulfil the law, not setting before them an imperative, but making the claim that Christians do as a matter of fact fulfil the law. When he was describing 'a life lived in conformity with Christian principles', it was 'for polemical reasons, important for him to say that Christian behaviour is condemned by no law (Gal.5:23), that the love which is the hallmark of Christian conduct in fact fulfils the law (Gal 5.14; Rom 13.8-10)' (pp.201-202). On p.219 Westerholm can actually speak of this claim which he thinks Paul is making as 'one-upmanship' on Paul's part.

But the *ἵνα* in Rom 8.4 is surely extremely significant. Paul is indicating that one purpose of God's saving deed in Christ was that the law's *δικαίωμα* (I take the word here to mean 'righteous requirement') might be fulfilled in us by our walking not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. In v.9a Paul uses the indicative. A process of sanctification is indeed going on in every Christian, but the *διὰ ἁμαρτίαν* in v.10 would seem to imply that Christians are still sinners. We take it that the fulfilment spoken of in v.4 is only begun, not something completed. That the implication of this passage is therefore that Christians must strive ever to move in the direction of the law's righteous requirement's being fulfilled in their lives seems to me clear enough.



In Rom 13.8-10 Paul speaks about the *debitum immortale*, the debt of love which we can never be finished with discharging. The point of v.8b could be to state a reason for loving one another: to do so is to fulfil the law. More probably, I think, it is to be understood as explaining why the debt of love can never be fully discharged: it cannot be fully discharged, for, if there were people who really and truly and in the fullest sense loved their neighbours, they would have done what Paul in Rom 1.18-3.31 has shown to be altogether beyond the reach of Jews and Gentiles alike - they would have fulfilled the law. Paul goes on to indicate that the particular commandments of the 'second table' of the Decalogue are all summed up in the commandment of Lev 19.18, 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', and to state that love is the fulfilling of the law. But, since Paul was apparently well aware that Christians can very easily persuade themselves that they are loving when they are not (note that twice in his surviving letters he uses the word ἀνυπόκριτος with reference to love - in Rom 12.9 and 2 Cor 6.6), it seems most unlikely that he would have countenanced the idea that Christians should forget the particular commandments and rely on the commandment of love as a sufficient guide. Is it not more likely that he recognised that, while Christians certainly need the summary to save them from missing the wood for the trees and from understanding the particular commandments in a rigid, literalistic, unimaginative or loveless way, they also need the particular commandments to save them from resting content with vague and often hypocritical sentiments, which - in ourselves and quite often in other people - we are all prone to mistake for Christian love?<sup>2</sup>

What has just been said with reference to Rom 13.8-10 may also serve as a comment on the third passage (Gal 5.14). But the fact that 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', contained in both Rom 13.9 and Gal 5.14, is not a novel Christian insight but the law's own summary of its requirements with regard to human relations must not be forgotten. To deny that this is clear evidence that Paul saw the law as having a continuing validity for Christians

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 2, Edinburgh, T&T Clark (5th imp.1989), p.679.

strikes me as exceedingly perverse. Paul no doubt did believe that 'Christian love inevitably meets the standards set by the law' (p.202) - if by 'Christian love' is meant *perfect* Christian love. But did he think that such perfect love was anywhere to be seen in the church on earth? I find it impossible to believe that the man who wrote Rom 1.18-3.31 had a 'retrospective' (p.202) view, when he quoted Lev 19.18 (or, for that matter, the specific commandments also quoted in Rom 13.9), and thought he was describing the actual conduct of Christians, not setting before them the goal towards which they have to strive lifelong.

Again I am puzzled by p.203, on which Westerholm seems to be suggesting that Paul thought (note the bold 'undoubtedly' at the top of the page!) that Christians are like the 'accomplished' or 'consummate' musician who has advanced beyond the stage of having to submit to the discipline of the elementary rules of music and now "fulfils" the intention of the rules without always observing them' (p.203). He claims that 'In a similar way, Paul can only believe that a life directed by God's Holy Spirit more than adequately "fulfils" the requirements of the law, even though specific demands have not been "done" and commands that are perceived to serve a purpose no longer have been ignored' (p.203), and on p.205 he actually states that 'For Paul it is important to say that Christians "fulfil" the whole law, and thus to claim that their conduct (and theirs alone) fully satisfies 'the "real" purport of the law in its entirety...'. But is it conceivable that Paul, who was familiar with the law's own summary of its requirements, 'thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might' (Deut 6.5) and 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Lev 19.18), could have thought that he himself or any of his fellow Christians was in a position to claim that he 'more than adequately' fulfilled the law's requirements (p.203), satisfied them 'completely' (p.204), fulfilled 'the whole law' (p.205), or that his conduct 'fully' satisfied 'the "real" purport of the law in its entirety' (p.205)?

In this section Westerholm makes a lot of the distinction in usage which he sees between πληροῦν and ποιεῖν. This should, I think, be viewed with a considerable amount of caution. Would it



not anyway have been more illuminating to have made the point that Paul can use πληροῦν with νόμον (or equivalent), both to denote the perfect obedience to the law which only Jesus has actually accomplished, and also to denote those beginnings of being turned in the direction of obedience which believers make in the freedom the Holy Spirit gives them?

## II

In the third section of the chapter Westerholm attempts to establish the third position listed on p.199 ('Paul consistently argues and assumes that Christians are no longer bound by the Mosaic code'). He claims at the start that 'the evidence that he [that is, Paul] believed Christians are free from the law is both explicit and abundant' (p.205). It will be necessary first to look at the evidence he brings forward and then to look at some things which he does not mention, which seem to point to a different conclusion.

Westerholm appeals first to Rom 6.14f and 1 Cor 9.20; but, as it should not be assumed that ὑπὸ νόμον is used in the same way in both passages, we may look first at the Romans passage together with Rom 7.1-6 to which Westerholm refers on pp.206-207. I have argued elsewhere<sup>3</sup> that in Rom 6.14b ('for ye are not under law, but under grace') Paul is thinking not of the law generally but of the law as condemning sinners, so of the law's condemnation. There seem to me to be a number of grounds for thinking this. First, the contrast between 'under law' (or probably better 'under the law') and 'under grace' can be said to support this explanation, since 'under God's condemnation' is a natural opposite to 'under grace' (i.e., God's grace or undeserved favour). Secondly, an assurance that Christians have been freed from God's condemnation seems a more apposite support (note the 'for' at the beginning of v.14b) for the promise that sin shall no longer be lord over them than an assurance that they are altogether free from the law would be: confidence that one has been released from God's condemnation does indeed enable one to begin to resist sin's tyranny with courage and hopefulness. Thirdly, Rom 8.1 ('There is therefore now no condemnation to them

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<sup>3</sup> Op.cit. 1 (7th imp.1990), pp.319-20.



that are in Christ Jesus') is surely strong support for this interpretation of οὐ ... ὑπὸ νόμον in 6.14, since it indicates that the point of 7.1-6, the significance of which it draws out (ἄρα νόμῳ), 7.7-25 being parenthetical, is the Christian's freedom from the law's condemnation, not from the law generally, and 7.1-6 seems to be naturally understood as connecting with 6.14b.

With regard to 1 Cor 9.20, it seems to me that the context suggests that Paul is here indicating not that he is not under the law at all, that it no longer has any validity for him, but that he is not under it in the same way as he had once been and as the non-Christian Jews are under it. Paul certainly recognised that there are very significant differences between the relation of Christians to the law and the relations of non-Christian Jews to it. Some of these will be noticed in the course of this article. But one is particularly relevant here. Whereas for the non-Christian Jew the literal observance of the ceremonial law is still obligatory, the Christian who knows that the One, to whom all along the law was pointing, has come and has accomplished his saving work, no longer has to observe it literally. (The word 'literally' in the last sentence is important; for what is being suggested is not (*pace* Westerholm, eg. pp.200, 202, 203) that the ceremonial law has simply been abrogated and that the Christian should just ignore it, but that he should honour it by looking steadfastly in the direction in which it was all along pointing, and by believing in Christ as he and his work are witnessed to by it.) But not all Christians understood this, and there were painful tensions in the church. Some insisted that all Christians must, for example, be circumcised, and their demands Paul strongly opposed. But there were others, who, while not trying to compel their fellow Christians to follow their pattern, felt that, as far as they themselves were concerned, they could not with a clear conscience give up the observance of such requirements of the law as the distinction between clean and unclean foods, the avoidance of blood, the keeping of the Sabbath. Yet they were liable to give way to the social pressure of those of their fellow Christians, who were confident that they had this freedom, to the detriment of their own integrity. Paul recognised their vulnerability, and was sensitive to it, as can be seen in Rom 14.1-15.13. Paul seems also to have tried to avoid giving unnecessary offence to non-Christian

Jews, in connection with the ceremonial law. In view of what has just been said (perhaps also in view of the words  $\mu\eta\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma\ \Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda'\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$  in v.21), it would seem to be unwise to claim 1 Cor 9.20 as clear evidence that Paul thought the law as a whole was no longer valid for him.

On p.206 Westerholm claims that 'ye were made dead to the law through the body of Christ' in Rom 7.4 'clearly includes release from the law's demands'. But is this at all clear? Is it not more natural, in view of what Paul has said about Christians' dying with Christ in 6.1-11, and of what he had already said about the meaning of Christ's death in 3.21-26; 4.25; 5.6-11, 18-19, to take him to be referring to release from the law's condemnation through Christ's death for them?

With regard to Gal 2.17-19, the exegetical problems involved are complicated, and there is far from being agreement about the thread of Paul's argument. If one sees a close connection between vv.15-21 and vv.11-14, in which Paul has related his public dispute with Peter in Antioch, one might well be inclined to think that the death of the law referred to in v.19 has simply to do with observation of the ceremonial part of the law. The second and third clauses of vv.19 and 20 might perhaps suggest that it is rather death to the law's condemnation. That Paul means death to the law generally is maintained by many; but it seems to me that this passage, taken by itself, provides a very insecure basis for holding that Paul saw the law as having no longer any validity for him.

Westerholm goes on to appeal to Gal 3.19-4.5 as showing 'the temporal limitations on the law's validity' (p.207). That Paul did indeed believe that there is a sense in which 'the epoch of the law has passed' may be readily agreed. We can speak of 'Old Testament times' or 'the Old Testament epoch' as of a period that is over and past, without implying that the Old Testament is no longer authoritative scripture for the Christian church. With the accomplishment of Jesus Christ's work the epoch of the law's unique authority had indeed come to an end; but it does not follow that the law had ceased to have validity for those who believe in him. Commandments like 'thou shalt have none other gods before



me', 'thou shalt do no murder', 'thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour', 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', did not cease to point the way to freedom and community and fulfilment, though they could now be more clearly recognised as God's fatherly guidance for his children. But Paul certainly thought that the relation of Christians to the law was very significantly different from that of non-Christian Jews to it.

Westerholm seems to say (p.208) that, if Paul accepts that observance of the ritual law was no longer binding on Christians, he cannot have regarded any part of the law as binding on them, because, if he had, he would have felt the need to 'provide his churches with detailed instructions as to which commands they were obligated to observe and which they were not' and 'there is no evidence that he made any such distinctions. On the contrary, it is clear that, for Paul, Torah was a unit' (p.208). But must not the distinction between ritual and moral have been clear for Paul? Is not Rom 7.7-25 illuminating in this connection? And Westerholm's argument from silence, from the absence of such detailed instructions as he refers to in the Pauline letters we possess, is surely precarious.

The further argument from 1 Cor 6.12ff. and 10.23ff that 'Both the slogan itself [πάντα (μοι) ἔξεστιν] and Paul's non-legal way of qualifying it clearly indicate that the Christian is not thought to be obligated to observe the demands of the law' (p.208) is scarcely cogent. Paul's quotation of the Corinthian libertines' slogan is not an unqualified endorsement of it, and the conclusion which Westerholm draws from the fact that Paul does not here appeal to any of the law's commands is by no means necessary. The specific commandments of the law are a guide for the gratitude of those who already know their indebtedness to God (cf. Exod 20.2; Deut 5.6); they are not themselves the ground of the believer's desire to obey them. The fact that Paul does not here adduce any commandments (in 1 Cor 6.20 - 'ye were bought with a price' - he appeals to what is more basic than God's commands), does not at all prove that he did not think that the law still had validity for Christians.

Westerholm's final argument in this section is that Paul sees Christians as having to 'discover' the will of God 'for themselves as their mind is "renewed" and they grow in insight' (he appeals to Rom 6.22; 12.2; Phil 1.9-10), instead of relying on the guidance of the law, and that this 'shows clearly that the will of God is no longer defined as an obligation to observe the law's statutes' (p.209). But, in answer to this, it may be said that use of the renewed mind and acceptance of the law's continuing validity are in no way incompatible; that Westerholm has already distorted the evidence by his treatment of the 'fulfilment' passages, Rom 8.4; 13.8-10; Gal 5.14; and that such language as he has used in the last-quoted sentence is liable to give a very false impression of the position of those Christians who do think that the law has a continuing validity for them, suggesting, as it does, a wooden observance of the law's letter rather than a free and joyful aiming at its intention.

Some things which seem to me to be positive support for the view that Paul believed that the law still has a place in the life of the Christian must now be mentioned. There is first the fact that he calls it God's law (Rom 7.22, 25; 8.7: cf. *pace* Westerholm, p.201, n.11) 1 Cor 7.19): this is surely important. Must we not assume, unless there is quite conclusive evidence to the contrary, that Paul, if he recognised that the law was God's, is likely to have seen it as still valid for Christians? Secondly, there is the striking affirmation in Rom 7.12 'So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good', to which Westerholm fails to pay the attention it deserves. I take it that Paul is affirming that both the law as a whole and its individual commandments are God's, that they are righteous both as directing human beings to try to act righteously and as manifesting God's own righteousness, and that they are intended to be beneficial to human beings. Is not this verse a very serious difficulty for those who maintain that Paul thought that the law no longer had any validity for Christians? Thirdly, his statement in Rom 7.14 that the law is 'spiritual' must be mentioned. It is surely an affirmation of its divine origin and by implication of its divine authority. Fourthly, Rom 7.14-25 as a whole must be mentioned; for, if those verses refer to the Christian life, as I am



still convinced that they do<sup>4</sup>, they would seem to be strong support for the view that Paul saw a continuing role for the law in the church. For in this passage the law is depicted as guiding the obedience of the new ego which God is creating (note especially v.25b). Fifthly, Rom 8.7 should be noted, since it seems to imply that those 'that are after the Spirit' should strive to be - and in some measure can be - 'subject to the law of God', in contrast with those whose life is characterised by 'the mind of the flesh'.

Sixthly, Paul's assertion in 1 Cor 7.19 that it is not circumcision or uncircumcision that matters 'but the keeping of the commandments of God' seems highly significant. Westerholm's contention (p.201, n.11) that by 'the commandments of God' Paul does not mean the commandments of the law, since 'the Mosaic law is not... in view in this chapter (the only "commandments" mentioned are Pauline and dominical; cf vv. 10, 17, 25, and the frequent Pauline imperatives)', is unconvincing. Would Paul really be likely to refer to his own or indeed dominical commandments as ἐντολαὶ θεοῦ? And, if the commandments of the law are meant, the use of the word τήρησις is significant. Does it not indicate that Paul was not under the illusion that Christians no longer need to try to obey the law? But a comparison of the parallel statements in Gal 5.6 and 6.15 is illuminating. For the πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη of the former indicates something of what Paul understood to be involved in keeping the commandments of God, while the καινὴ κτίσις of the latter is a reminder that it is only as the Holy Spirit creates a new self in a human being that he or she is freed to begin to obey God's law.

Seventhly, there is the fact that the legislative elements of the Pentateuch were an integral part of what Paul knew and revered as Scripture. Westerholm, while accepting that Paul can use νόμος of the Pentateuch as a whole (e.g. in the phrase 'the law and the prophets' in Rom 3.21) and also of the Old Testament as a whole (e.g., in Rom 3.19; 1 Cor 14.21), insists that νόμος 'in Paul's writings frequently (indeed, most frequently) refers to the sum of

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<sup>4</sup> *pace* N.T.Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the law in Pauline theology*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1991, pp.196-225.

specific divine requirements given to Israel through Moses' (p.108). But while a verse like Gal 3.17, which refers to the four hundred and thirty years between the making of the covenant and the giving of the law, makes it clear that Paul was aware of the different senses νόμος could have, have we really any justification for supposing that he thought of the law in this narrowest sense as something which could now be separated from its context in Scripture and assigned a value inferior to that of the rest of the Pentateuch? But, if he did regard it as an integral part of Scripture, we shall not arrive at a genuine solution to the problem of Paul's view of the law (in Westerholm's narrowest sense of the term) until we try to understand it within, rather than outwith, the framework of his view of the nature and authority of the Old Testament scriptures as a whole.

What has been said above seems to me to suggest strongly that Westerholm was much too quick to conclude that, for Paul, the law no longer has validity for Christians.

### III

I turn now to the fourth section of chapter X (headed 'The Letter and the Spirit')<sup>5</sup>. The position it seeks to maintain was indicated on p.199 thus: 'The mark of Christian ethics is life in the Spirit, an ethic which Paul explicitly contrasts with obligation to the law'. About the decisive importance of the Holy Spirit's part in the Christian life as Paul understood it there can, of course, be no doubt. It is the Holy Spirit who brings about the sanctification of believers. But it does not follow from this that Paul must have regarded 'walking in the Spirit' (so Westerholm, p.214) or walking by the Spirit (cf. Gal 5.16) as 'an ethical norm *replacing* the law' (p.214). Paul knew the painful truth that Christians, though indeed indwelt by God's Spirit, do not always walk by the Spirit but often resist him and walk according to their own fallen human nature. He knew that they can be poor judges of the relative values of the various spiritual gifts, esteeming the showy and exciting ones above

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<sup>5</sup> See also Westerholm's article "'Letter" and "Spirit": the foundation of Pauline *Ethics*', in *NTS* 30(1984), pp.229-48.



the more precious. He knew too that Christians are liable to be complacent, confident that they are rich, already reigning (1Cor 4.8). In view of this I should need a lot of convincing that Paul could have thought of walking by the Spirit as an ethical norm replacing the law. Is not the Christian's experience of the Spirit something too individual, too liable to be mixed with the Christian's subjective thoughts, feelings and desires, to be a satisfactory ethical norm? The fact that Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to learn 'not to go beyond the things which are written' (1 Cor 4.6) and the fact that he has left us clear evidence of his own deep and constant engagement with the Old Testament scriptures lead me to think it much more likely that he regarded the law and, along with it, the rest of the Old Testament and also the tradition of the ministry and teaching of Jesus as the proper norm and standard of Christian conduct, a standard open and common to all believers, something objective, and that he thought of the Holy Spirit as the one who enables Christians rightly to understand the scriptures and the Jesus tradition and sets them free to begin to obey.

In his discussion of the letter-Spirit antithesis (pp.209-213) he deals with Rom 2.27 (strangely, he ignores, apart from a footnote, 2.29, though it is in that verse and not in v.27 that γράμμα and πνεῦμα actually occur together); Rom 7.6 and 2 Cor 3.6. Throughout this discussion he persists in attributing to those scholars, who believe that the Old Testament law still has a validity for Christians, an inclination to take γράμμα in these passages to mean a misunderstanding or a perversion of the law. There is an element of truth in this, and yet it is misleading and has the effect of setting up a straw man which can then be demolished without trouble. For a simple equation, γράμμα = 'a misunderstanding or a perversion of the law' clearly will not do. Had Westerholm read the passage<sup>6</sup> he quotes as representative of the view he is attacking and also its context more carefully, he might have recognised that its author was not suggesting quite so simplistic and unthought-through a solution as he supposes. Its author was, in fact, trying - however inadequately - to do justice both to the fact that οἶδαμεν .. ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστίν (Rom 7.14) makes it extremely

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<sup>6</sup> C.E.B.Cranfield, *op.cit.* 1, pp.339-40.

unlikely that Paul could intend a simple opposition between the Spirit and the law (so that a straight identification of γράμμα with the law is unsatisfactory) and also to the fact that γράμμα must indeed refer to the law itself. He therefore tried to suggest that, while γράμμα certainly refers to the law itself, it denotes the law itself as it is apart from that full and true effectiveness which it only possesses, when the Holy Spirit enables those who hear it truly to understand it in the light of Jesus Christ, and frees them to make a beginning of obeying it.

Westerholm, by contrast, understands Paul to use γράμμα to indicate the obligation on those under the law to obey it. So with reference to Rom 7.6 he says: 'serving God by the "letter" must refer to the *obligation* of those subject to the old covenant to carry out the concrete commands of the law of God' (p.212); and, with reference to those three texts, Rom 2.27; 7.6; and 2 Cor 3.6 he says: 'Paul means seriously that those who lived under the law were obligated to fulfil the "letter"; indeed, the purpose of the law could only be achieved if those who were under its yoke were bound to observe its terms... Now, however, the way of the "letter" (i.e., obedience to the law) has become, for believers, a thing of the past; service is now rendered "in the new life of the Spirit" (Rom 7.6)' (p.213).

But in reply to Westerholm it must be said that the contrast Paul has in mind is not a contrast between a life lived under the obligation to try to obey the law and a life in which that obligation has been replaced by the guidance of the Spirit, but rather a contrast between the life of those, who, though possessing the law, have not yet been enabled by the Holy Spirit rightly to understand it in the light of Christ, and the life of those whom the Holy Spirit has both enabled to understand the law aright in the light of Jesus Christ and also set free to make a beginning of trying to obey it with humble joy.

With regard to the last section of Chapter X (v. The Origin of Paul's View), it seems to me that the sentence, 'Furthermore, since the law's demands cannot be detached from its sanctions, deliverance from the law's curse inevitably means freedom from its



demands as well' (p.217f) is plainly fallacious. By what logic is it claimed that the law's demands cannot be detached from its sanctions? By what logic is it asserted that deliverance from the law's curse inevitably means freedom from its commands as well?

#### IV

In conclusion three brief observations may be made.

1. Westerholm seems inclined to assume that Paul must either have regarded the law as having no place in the Christian life or else have continued to find the will of God in it 'in the way he did as a Pharisee' (p.214). But surely *tertium datur*! We may conclude that he continued to find the will of God in it, but did so now in a new and distinctive Christian way. It is of the utmost importance that we do not underestimate the newness of the Christian's understanding of, and relation to, the law. He understands it in the light of Christ, in the light of his perfect obedience to it and of his clarification of its intention by his life and work and teaching. He has been freed from the illusion that he is able so well to fulfil it as to put God in his debt. He knows that, while it shows him the depth of his sinfulness, it no longer pronounces God's condemnation of him, since Christ has borne that condemnation for him. He no longer feels its commands simply as an obligation imposed on him from without, but is being set free by the Holy Spirit to desire wholeheartedly to try to obey and thereby to express his gratitude to God for his mercy and generosity. So he receives the law's commands as God's fatherly guidance for his children - not as a burden or an infringement of his liberty, but as the pointing out of the way to true freedom.

2. Westerholm seems to me to have failed to make any serious effort to understand the view of the law, which has been characteristic of, but by no means confined to, the Reformed churches and Reformed theology. It is noticeable that in his book Calvin gets not a single mention and Barth, I think, but half a line. The importance attached to the Decalogue in Christian education by such Reformed catechisms as the Geneva of 1541, the Heidelberg of 1563, the Westminster Larger and Shorter of 1648, is well

known<sup>7</sup>. And in this matter of the place of the law in the life of Christians the Church of England has stood alongside the Reformed churches, as may be seen from the fact that in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer (as also in the 1552 Prayer Book) the rehearsing of the Ten Commandments has its place in the order of the Lord's Supper (note the repeated response, 'Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law'), while both in Rite A and in Rite B of the Alternative Service Book of 1980 provision is made for either the Summary of the Law (itself, of course, including two quotations from the law) or the Ten Commandments to be read. The view that Paul saw the law as having a continuing role in the life of Christians deserves a more sympathetic and careful consideration than Westerholm has given it.

3. It is perhaps wise to add - though it should surely go without saying - that to argue that the Old Testament law has a continuing validity in the Christian church does not at all mean that one ignores the great diversity of the materials which make it up (to treat them as a homogeneous code would, of course, be absurd) or denies the need for properly rigorous critical and historical study of it. It is possible to recognise that the law, like every other part of the Old Testament and also of the New, is from beginning to end the words of men and at the same time to take it seriously as God's law<sup>8</sup>

C. E. B. Cranfield

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<sup>7</sup> An interesting recent example is J.M. Lochman, *Signposts to Freedom: The Ten Commandments and Christian ethics*, Belfast, Dublin, Ottawa, Christian Journals Ltd., 1981 (English translation by David Lewis of *Wegweisung der Freiheit: Abriss der Ethik in der Perspektive des Dekalogs*, Gütersloh, Gerd Mohn, 1979).

<sup>8</sup> I tried to say something on the subject touched on in this paragraph in 'St. Paul and the Law', in *SJT* 17(1964) p.67: but this was omitted for the sake of brevity in my *ICC Romans* 2 (cited above), p.861.

## Sermon for St. Mark's Day.

Rev. Prof. E. Best.

The Mark whom we celebrate today is the author of the second gospel, the first to be written. Whether this Mark is identical with the Mark who forsook Paul and Barnabas when the going got tough (Acts 13:13) or with the Mark whose greeting Peter conveys in his letter (1 Peter 2:13) is neither here nor there. If this and one or two other references to 'Mark' in the New Testament was all there was to remember him by we would not be celebrating him today. This day is dedicated to the author of the Gospel according to Mark. What then was the measure of his achievement? To get at this we must first think of the church in which he wrote his gospel.

The Christian community in Rome for which he wrote had existed for at least twenty years before he wrote. Paul's letter to it shows that it was already a strong community, and Paul wrote twelve or thirteen years before Mark. From its beginning stories about Jesus must have been current among its members; they would have been brought to Rome by those who first founded the church there, possibly traders from Palestine. Others who came later would have added to the stock of stories. Among such would have been Simon Peter and we probably owe to him many of the stories in the Gospel in which he features. All the stories would have been told and retold in the community. Because Rome was far away from Palestine many details irrelevant to the Roman Christians would have been dropped. Who in Rome cared in which Palestinian village Jesus healed a leper or told the parable of the sower? What was important was that he had done so. Geographical data were forgotten, as were also the names of those Jesus healed; in the Gospel they are mostly nameless. Details of time also disappeared for it was not important to Christians in Rome whether Jesus healed a particular person or told a particular parable in March or in October. So the introductory phrases in Mark's gospel rarely give us any clue as to when things happened. Most incidents are linked to what precedes or follows by a simple 'and' or 'and immediately (forthwith)'. Losses of detail in respect of time, place and name are then what we would expect, especially in a community which passed on its stories by word of mouth and lived



far away from where the events had taken place. But the absence of such details clearly creates problems for anyone who wishes to put them together.

Mark's first achievement was to find a way of putting the separate stories together, though some were already joined. Apparently people had begun to group together incidents of similar nature. So you find in Mark's fourth chapter a number of parables brought together; it is unlikely that Jesus told all of his parables at the same time. There are also little collections of stories in which Jesus is engaged in controversy with Jewish leaders (2:1 - 3:6) and of his miracles (4:35 - 5:43). Yet controversies and miracles cannot have been restricted to a few days in Jesus' life. Anyway these and a large number of other unconnected incidents had to be placed in relation to one another. Of course some of them had a natural position. You couldn't have the death of Jesus anywhere other than near the end of the story and you couldn't put his baptism anywhere other than near the beginning. But given these two fixed positions there is a tremendous amount of material which could be placed in a number of different positions.

How was Mark to give this a shape, to put it in order? He hadn't the information to give it chronological order, which is what we would naturally expect. He has in fact chosen to unify his material in such a way that it divides into three main sections with a prologue and an epilogue. Prologue and epilogue suggest that a better word than sections for what lies between them would be 'Acts', as in the acts of a drama. What he ends up with can be regarded both as biography and drama.

The prologue (1:1-15) is brief but crammed with material. Mark commences by quoting texts from the Old Testament so that we understand that the story he is telling does not begin with Jesus or his birth (remember that Mark's readers knew something of his earthly origin) but with a plan that God has been working out through his people, the Jews. All through his book we find Mark harking back to bits of the Old Testament as if to indicate that what happens to Jesus, especially his death, is not chance but part of God's plan. Mark next introduces a strange figure, John the

Baptist, whom we know about from other Jewish writings. But he doesn't tell us much about him; just enough to relate him to Jesus. He baptises with water but Jesus will baptise with Holy Spirit. And straightway we're told how Jesus is equipped with the Holy Spirit; you cannot give to others what you yourself do not have. Jesus comes to John, is baptised by him and the Holy Spirit comes down on him like a dove. Oddly from our point of view Mark tells us nothing about what brought Jesus to John; was he inspired by John's preaching? Was he looking for a role in life to which he might devote himself? We don't know and Mark does not give us time to speculate. He drives us on from the baptism to a contest between Jesus and the devil. If the devil is opposed to Jesus and Jesus is trying to carry out God's will then the devil must try to stop Jesus. Two brief verses tell us about the contest but don't tell us anything about the nature of the temptation as do Matthew and Luke and tell us nothing about their result; we are left to deduce from what follows that the devil has not been able to stop Jesus. For Jesus begins to preach about the Kingdom of God, a Jewish term. To describe the prologue has taken me a few minutes; Mark got it all into fifteen verses, obviously a writer who is not going to waste words.

That is the end of the prologue and strictly speaking if this was a drama the curtain would come down and there would be a brief pause. But it is not being acted out on a stage so we go directly to the next incident which flows out of the last: Jesus has preached; will his preaching have any effect? We see at once that it does. He goes to four fishermen and calls on them to follow him and they do. Now we are launched into the first Act.

There is no time to look at this Act (1:16 - 8:26). It is crammed full of activity on the part of Jesus. He heals, he teaches, he moves from one place to another. Crowds are drawn to him; Jewish leaders begin to show their opposition. Everything takes place at breakneck speed. Again and again as Mark drives to story forward he writes of one incident as following immediately on top of another. His favourite way of uniting events is with the word 'immediately' (or 'forthwith' or something similar; English translations differ). Two impressions are left; as I have said, the

furious activity of Jesus (who then can he be?), and in addition a strange inability on the part of his closest followers to understand what he is about. They are puzzled yet they don't leave him. So Mark show him as an extraordinary person from whom we may expect great things. But it works out very differently.

The second Act (8:27 - 10:52) is of a different kind altogether. If the first had speed and lacked real structure the second has structure but moves more leisurely. We are now made to think about Jesus and what he is about. The structure is that of a journey. It begins with Jesus as far away from his own area as possible, out in pagan Caesarea Philippi. Mark traces a journey which Jesus makes as he moves south from there through Galilee, along the Jordan through Jericho and up to Jerusalem. On this journey Jesus teaches his disciples about himself and about how they are to be disciples. It is no chance that this takes place on a journey; it is a kind of pilgrimage; Mark draws this out by continually referring to Jesus as being on the way or on the road at the head of his disciples.

But what does Jesus teach his disciples about himself? Chiefly what is going to happen to him; he says it three different times: 'I am going to be delivered into the hands of men that they will kill me; and when I am killed, after three days I will rise'. This is to happen in Jerusalem, hence the journey is a journey to that city. We can see by now how the end of the story is beginning to dominate what precedes it. The three predictions that Jesus makes of what is going to happen to him are brief; they don't need to be lengthy. Mark's readers already know the full story and what is going to happen when Jesus reaches Jerusalem. So he doesn't waste time on unnecessary details.

But each time Mark gives one of the predictions he goes on immediately to drive home its implications for the disciples. If he is about to take up his cross than they must take up theirs. If he is not about to demand his rights as a true leader of the Jewish people and so be saved by God from humiliation, they too must learn what it means to be humble and he sets before them a child and tells them that their behaviour should resemble the child's. If he is king of the Jews and does not assert his kingship with worldly authority



then they must learn that the ideal for them is not ruling over people but serving others as a slave does.

Now we have reached Jerusalem and the third Act.(11:1 - 15:47). It is strange that Jesus has not been to Jerusalem before this. In the Gospel of John he makes a number of visits before the final visit when he is put to death. A number of visits would be natural for Jerusalem was both the political and the religious capital of the Jews. The temple, the centre of their faith, was there. Only in Jerusalem could the main Jewish festivals be celebrated or sacrifices be offered. Surely Jesus and his disciples went to some of these! Mark has shaped his use of the material so that Jesus only goes once to Jerusalem; this is the climax of his life, and it is his death.

If the second Act was structured as a journey with a list of places visited the third has a different pattern altogether. The whole takes place in six days and the days are spelt out. On the first he comes to Jerusalem, visits the temple, goes back to Bethany where he is staying. On the second he returns to Jerusalem and cleanses the temple; and so on through the rest of the week. But as we get near the end it is not sufficient just to apportion the events out in times of days; so much has to be fitted into the last twenty-four hours that they are marked out in briefer periods. After six p.m. on Thursday he and his disciples keep the Passover festival, he goes to the agony of Gethsemane, he is betrayed and arrested, put on trial, condemned. At daybreak he is sent to Pilate for another trial because the Jews have not the authority from the Romans to put criminals to death; at nine in the morning he is taken out and crucified; from twelve noon until three in the afternoon there are strange signs as he hangs on the cross; at three he dies. And we are at the end of a kind of countdown.

Now there is a break. It is the Sabbath and no-one can do anything. We come to the epilogue (16: 1-8): Jesus is laid in the tomb and the story pauses. Then comes Sunday morning and the women, who unlike the men have not deserted Jesus, go out to the tomb. It is empty but there is a messenger with a message: 'Go and tell his disciples and Peter (Peter is especially mentioned because

he has gone further than the other disciples in denying Jesus) that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you' (16:7, cf 14:28). And with that the story seems to tail off into nothing. The women in fear run away from the tomb and tell no one. Of course they must have told someone or we would not know the content of the message. The other Gospels all follow up the narrative of the discovery of the empty tomb with accounts of the appearances of the risen Jesus to the women or to the disciples. Because we are used to the way the other Gospels end we expect something more from Mark; indeed in the second century some of those who expected more wrote new endings to the Gospel to include appearances of the risen Jesus. The Authorised Version provides one such account beginning at 16:9. Mark never wrote it, though there is no reason to doubt that accounts of such appearances would have been known in Rome; Peter, if no one else, would have recounted them.

Why then did Mark not include them? Such accounts tie down the activity of the risen Jesus to a limited number of discrete events. If there are appearances they have to be ended in some way and so in Luke's Gospel there is the ascension story. Has Jesus then left his church without his presence? In Acts there is no real sense of his continued presence. By omitting the appearance stories Mark has set Jesus free from being confined to a number of isolated appearances; he can now always be with his church. For Mark Jesus remains alive in the story he has told; he remains alive in his words and his actions and in his ability to draw men and women after him. The messenger at the tomb says Jesus has gone back to Galilee, that is to the place where the story began, and when we go back to the beginning of Mark's story we find Jesus there.

That's the story as Mark tells it though much abbreviated. But I believe it enables us to see it as a whole and to see that it sticks together; it is an artistic unity. Most modern biographies follow a chronological outline and their unity comes from the life they narrate. That Mark succeeded in creating an artistic unity can be seen in the way an actor like Alex McCowen can take the story and retell it in dramatic fashion in such a way as to fill theatres. The theatre succeeds in doing for Mark what the church ought to be

doing. The church breaks up the story in its teaching and its lectionaries and we lose the impact of the whole. Mark of course was not a great literary artist; his style is rather horrible by good Greek standards (the English of the A.V. is no clue to the quality of his Greek). But though story tellers in many oral cultures have never been great artists in that sense yet they have been able to narrate what they say in a way which has riveted their hearers. That is where Mark's artistry lies. Not that he would have been pleased with me for saying that one of his achievements was the creation of an artistic unity. He was planning a theological unity. But in the case of a narrative the two must go together and there is also a theological unity.

If Mark did not seek an artistic unity neither did he seek to set out for us material about the life of Jesus. Yet if he and the evangelists who followed him had not told their stories we would lack real detail on the life of Jesus. Paul tells us hardly anything about Jesus other than that he died and rose. He gives us only two or three of his sayings. We can see he knew more but that is only because we have the gospels to help us detect the more. The life of the church has then been infinitely enriched by what Mark has given us. Mark of course never dreamt the world would last another nineteen centuries after his death and he did not set out to preserve for posterity the stories about Jesus. But he did set them down and we have them and for that we shall be eternally grateful to him.

If we had been able to ask Mark what he was trying to do I'm not sure what he would have answered. Probably he would have drawn our attention to the word 'gospel' in his opening verse. The word was in use before his time; it described the content of sermons; those who delivered them preached the gospel. There were a whole lot of short statements setting out the gospel for there were many ways of proclaiming it. Perhaps the best known is the brief creed in which Paul educated the Corinthians and which he said others had taught him: 'Christ dies for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and he appeared to Cephas (i.e. Peter), then to the twelve' (I Cor. 15: 3-5). In a way this is a kind of narrative but it is also a series of theological statements. Many people must have



been dissatisfied with its brevity. Who was this Jesus who features in it? Why did he die? Do the things he said and did cohere at all with the way he died? Mark tells the story of Jesus in such a way as to make his life explain his death. He is not a ghost figure or a theologian's speculation but a real person who did not just die loving people but loved and cared for them throughout all his life. What Mark has done has been to make the life of Jesus as much as his death and resurrection a part of the gospel. His book is not only biography and drama but also sermon. It does not begin with his death and its significance for sin but with a living human being. I was once talking about this with a knowledgeable Maori from New Zealand. He said to me, 'When the missionaries first came to us they told us about sin and how Christ had died for us and we did not listen for we did not know what sin was; then they told us about Jesus and we became Christians'. Because of Mark the life of Jesus belongs to the gospel as much as his death and resurrection.

But Mark has another achievement to his credit. In what I have called Act II he created a journey to Jerusalem in which Jesus spoke of his fate and linked what was going to happen to him to the way his disciples should live. In that way Mark made our understanding of the Christian life depend on our understanding of Jesus. Now undoubtedly Paul had related the two but because he never tells us much about the earthly life of Jesus he is never able to draw this out effectively. Mark has shown us that for our lives we have an example, not just an example of courageous death in obedience to God's will, for Paul showed that, but a life lived in obedience and full of incident, of care for others and of penetrating instruction. Without Mark and the evangelists who followed him the imitation of Christ would never have been a real possibility.

I return to the end of Mark's story. As I've said it's a peculiar ending. You don't quite understand it, nor do I. But it forces me to go back and read the whole thing again in the hope that I might understand it better. And may Mark not have intended this? When we come to the end we have neither understood Jesus properly nor have we understood ourselves and what Jesus is asking of us. All through the gospel the disciples have been failing in just these respects, and dare we claim to be any better? We are not different

from them. They must have relived over and over again in their minds how they had been with him and had not grasped what he wanted of them. They had not only failed to understand; they had failed him by running away at his arrest and by denying him. Hence the final message: Go and tell his disciples and Peter. It is a message also for us when we fail him as we do. We may have dropped back as it were in our following of him but he summons us to pick up again our discipleship for he goes before us into Galilee; going on before us leading us in the mission of the church which he has left to us and being always with us while we have and read Mark's Gospel.

E. Best

## **Church Government**

**Very Rev. Dr A. J. Weir\***

Irish Presbyterian ministers are all required publicly to declare their belief that 'the Presbyterian form of Church government is founded on and agreeable to the Word of God'. How this may be interpreted by them probably varies. Some may take a more traditionalist, even exclusive, view in finding specific Biblical precedent for our particular form of Church government and office. More now might seek to derive these from examples and principles demonstrated in the New Testament, yet without claiming an exclusive derivation for our Presbyterianism.

Church history may chart the development of Christian theory and practice down the centuries in a variety of social contexts; yet a direct comparison of the New Testament Church, taken as a whole and not just from isolated texts read in the light of later practices, suggest: - that Peter was no Pope, nor Popes a continuing of Peter's ministry; that Apostles were not Bishops, nor Bishops generally Apostles; that the Jerusalem Seven were not models for our Deaconates; and that Biblical Presbyters were not Priests, nor even generally Presbyterian Ministers. Such generalisation, of course, may require qualification, yet still provide a truer perspective on the Church both then and now than would the reverse.

## **Papacy**

When considering the Papacy, the key text offered is, of course, Matt 16: 18, 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.' There have been centuries of argument over whether, in these words of Jesus, the rock refers primarily to Peter as a person, or to the faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God; a faith from which he so speedily turned, to be rebuked so

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devastatingly by Jesus with another title, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'

In fact, the account which Acts gives of Pentecost and the early days of the Jerusalem Church does show Peter personally playing a key role in the initial proclamation of the Christian Gospel and the formation of the Christian Church; but there is no follow through, to show Peter exercising even a lifetime's exclusive presidency, let alone jurisdiction over or direction of the Church. It is Jesus' brother James who presides at the formal council in Jerusalem in Acts 15; and it is Paul who stands firm against the backsliding policies that are linked with both, whether in the later confrontation at Antioch, or by those who came to correct his liberating practice in his mission Churches. And in the Petrine epistles the apostolic author writes claiming only the status of a 'fellow elder' (presbyter) and a 'brother'.

The papal claim or deduction rests rather on the assumption that the new Church community must be organised according to the patterns of the kingdoms (not to say empires) of this world, rather than of God's kingdom or kingly rule — a fellowship in which none are masters, as Jesus describes it in Matt 23: 1-10. This sort of assumption repeats itself in other systems of Church government and organisation, in line with contemporary social structures.

## **Episcopacy**

Episcopacy, more particularly interpreted as Church government under a conventional 'three-fold ministry', and Bishops in an 'apostolic succession', may cite the account given in Acts 1 of the replacement of Judas in the number of the apostolic Twelve. In the second part of v.20 'His bishoprick (literally oversight, supervising) let another take.' The Hebrew word for oversight, as used in the Psalm, also appears in the book of Numbers to describe the oversight entrusted to Aaron's son Eleazar over 'those who had charge of the sanctuary' (3:32) as also 'of all the tabernacle and of all that therein is' (4:16).

If there was initially any intention of carrying into the new community Old Testament ideas of office and institutionalised succession this was not kept up by someone being appointed to succeed the Apostle James after his murder by Herod, as told in Acts 12. Nor is there any hint of a preoccupation with this aspect of office, on the lines of the Old Testament. The evidence rather is that the distinctive apostolic calling or function was to mission evangelism rather than Church oversight or administration, to spreading the good news of Jesus' life ministry, from the baptism of John till his resurrection, according to the qualification for Judas' replacement as set by Peter in Acts 1:22. This too was the function inherent in the title 'Apostle', as first given to the twelve disciples, according to Luke 6:13.

### **The Seven 'Deacons'**

The next evolution in the organisation of the early Church, after the replacement of Judas, is recorded in Acts 6. We are told how seven men were appointed to assist or relieve the Apostles, after complaints of neglect of the Grecians or Hellenistic Jewish widows in the administration of the Church's charity in the daily 'serving of the tables' (6:1-6). The Greek word for serving is indeed literally 'deaconing', and this event came to be taken as the origin for the office of deacon in the later Church, though the description could apply to all kinds of ministering service.

The book of Acts, in fact, never uses the official title 'Deacon' of the men appointed in Jerusalem. If, in making the proposal, Peter thought that the Apostles were freeing themselves from the hassle of caring for the practical side of Church life and settling the bickering between the two groups of disciples by generously handing over the whole administration to seven men who, if we go by their names, were drawn entirely from the aggrieved Hellenists, we may be sure experience would soon have disillusioned him! Acts gives us no account of how they dealt with the problem of the widows; but in later references to the members of the group speaks of them as the Seven, in the same way as the Apostles were also termed the Twelve. This suggests that they were seen more like auxiliary Apostles, appointed to reflect the

expanding character of the Church. And it was in apostolic work that they are so presented, in the persons of Stephen and Philip — not to speak of Stephen's more particular successor, in terms of cultural background, spiritual vision and missionary outlook, the Apostle Paul. If the New Testament does provide us with an informal, spiritual 'apostolic succession', it is to be found in the line Peter, Stephen, Paul.

When references are eventually made in the Pastoral epistles (and in the opening address of the letter to the Philippians) to 'Deacons' as distinct office bearers in the Church, they appear regularly associated with others who are entitled 'Bishops', though without defining their separate functions or relationships. Their qualifications in character, as set out in I Timothy ch.3, are fundamentally similar. Nor is the relationship of either with the office of Presbyter-elder, which is even more widely featured, anywhere clearly explained, though Titus 1:5 & 7 would suggest an equivalence between Presbyter and Bishop. In any case there is no New Testament presentation of a conventionally structured three-fold (or more accurately 'three grade') ministry.

### **Presbyter-Elder-Priest**

The third, middle partner in that threefold ministry is the Presbyter or Priest. Linguistically these are but the longer and shorter forms of the same word, but the characters or functions they describe are quite distinct. The Biblical Greek word 'πρεσβύτερος' refers to an older, senior person, a Church elder. The Bible has a totally different word for what is usually meant by 'priest', namely the Greek word 'ἱερεύς', appearing in our word hierarchy (or, in Latin, 'sacerdos', from which we have our adjective sacerdotal). These described the members of a priestly order who offered sacrifices and regulated or ran most religious institutions and observances, both then and now, for the majority of ordinary people who were the 'laity'. Yet the term ἱερεύς-priest is never used in the New Testament as a title or description of office in the organised ministry of the Christian Church; though it was such a prominent office in the religion of the Old Testament, and of the Dead Sea Scrolls.



The letter to the Hebrews is indeed largely taken up with the idea of a Christian priesthood; but it is the high priesthood of Jesus Christ himself, the true heavenly, spiritual priesthood of a self-sacrifice offered once-for-all, that sacrifice to end our sacrifices and replace the provisions of God's old covenant with Israel with one that was radically new and better in every way. In speaking of Jesus in ch. 8:4 it says, 'If he were on earth he would not be a priest, seeing there are priests that offer gifts according to the law (of Moses)'. If there was no place for Christ to serve in office, or sacrificial gifts to offer as an earthly priest, how much less for any ministering in his Church to offer sacrifices on behalf of a Christian laity! The only other Christian priesthood referred to in the New Testament is where the word is used metaphorically to describe the ministry of the whole believing people set in an unbelieving world.

If we try to read the New Testament in its own light, and not so much in the light of later ecclesiastical developments, not just the early Church but also the whole of Jesus' own ministry takes on the character of what we may term a layperson's religious movement, rather than a priestly-clerical institution. Not only was Jesus himself a layperson, in Jewish terms, but so were his disciples (if we disregard some conjectures on John's family connections). The Lord's Prayer has the character of a layperson's prayer, simple, direct and brief; and even it had to be elicited from Jesus by the disciples so as to keep up with those of John the Baptist. There is none of that detailed instruction on ceremonial rites and rules, set actions, clothing, words, etc., such as are found prescribed in the Old Testament, or the roughly contemporaneous Dead Sea Scrolls, such as might be expected in the training of disciples. And Jesus' own attendances at the temple in Jerusalem or regularly at synagogue are treated incidentally rather than centrally to his mission.

How then did priesthood come to be the most widespread office in the New Testament Church - with twenty references to five each for bishops and deacons? The most obvious explanation is that, seeing how organised religions everywhere around them involved priests providing sacrificial services for their worshippers,

and as the Christian community grew and spread in competition with them, so it developed more of the customary forms of institutionalised religion in a Christianised form. The fellowship sacrament of the Lord's Supper became a sacrificial substitute, ritually performed for the benefit of worshippers by substitute priests.

## **Presbyterian Presbyters**

But if Biblical presbyters were not to function as priests, what was their office? In our form of Presbyterianism we too are inclined to seize on one text, interpreted in a particular way - namely I Timothy 5:17, 'Let the elders (presbyters) who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in word and doctrine (i.e. in preaching and teaching)'. As a passing comment this is a slim basis for defining two distinct, permanent offices in the Church - interpreted as being the 'teaching elder', worthy of double honour, presiding over a number of co-operative 'ruling elders'. It should be noted first that it is not the teaching elder as such who is worthy of double honour, but all the elders who rule well, with the teaching thrown in as a special example.

There is no inherent reason why this text should be singled out and treated pivotally when compared with others which tell of a variety of descriptive offices in the early Church. These include what we might now interpret as the 'missionary' apostles, prophetic preachers and teachers, shepherding pastors, supervising bishops and ministering deacons. Paul's letters also list with these a variety of gifts or gifted persons provided for the Church's benefit, such as miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; Rom. 12:6-8 etc.) All these titles are descriptive of particular functions or services being provided. The one exception is the presbyter, itself simply meaning an older, senior man, a church elder.

Elders are referred to in the life of Israel, both in the Old Testament and the New; and they are to be found in many societies as the natural local leaders of their communities, usually functioning as a representative, responsible group. Biblically it

seems significant that they had no part in the liturgical rituals or religious organisation of Israel. In so far as anything in Israel's vocation as God's chosen people could be termed secular, theirs was a secular office, lacking in the sacral overtones of royalty. Yet this was the title chosen for the formal office round which the early Church was organised, not only locally but also in Jerusalem in association with the apostles (Acts 14:23; 15:6 etc.)

The picture we are given is of a people's Church, exercising a remarkable freedom in organising its life and worship as the needs arose, and enjoying a spiritual life and fellowship both in unity and diversity. Theirs was not so much a Church divided between clergy and laity — on the one side those who were providers of religious goods and services and on the other the people who were their customers or clients — Paul's picture of the Church is more that of a living body, in which everyone had their part to play as a vital member. These could cover a whole range of charismatic ministries or 'deaconing' services, under the 'episcopal' supervision of responsible, representative presbyter-elders drawn from the local Church.

As a religious movement the Protestant Reformation sought to recover the New Testament perspective in the context of their own contemporary world and its social and political structures. The local historical context and the individual personalities of the great Reformers contributed to the variety of forms this took, read back into the world of the New Testament. Presbyterial Churchmanship still bears the marks of its formative period in the bourgeois societies of the self-governing city states of Switzerland and the leadership of an independent minded gentry in France, the Netherlands and Scotland etc. It still bears the marks, too, of John Calvin's scholarly, not to say schoolmasterish, temperament, in which he seems to see the Church in the model of a school for Christians, or more theoretically and scholastically as a school for Christianity.

It was in this context that the Reformed Church sought to re-establish a version of the Biblical πρεσβύτερος-elder, by the appointment of responsible, representative leaders of the local



Christian community to share with the ministers of the Word in the oversight, government and discipline of Church life. However, despite Calvin's citation of I Timothy 5:17 (*Institutes* IV, xi, i) which he says, 'distinguishes two kinds of presbyters: those who labour in the Word, and those who do not carry on the preaching of the Word but rule well....who are appointed to supervise morals and to use the whole power of the keys,' in exercise of the Church's jurisdictional authority; it is soon clear that those who were merely ruling elders were seen as assistants to the teaching rulers, like school monitors in support, rather than the leading officers of the Church.

### Teaching Priests?

Many Reformed and Presbyterian theologians, in fact, have questioned whether our ruling elders are Biblical presbyters at all, or should not rather be seen in terms of the helps and governments listed in Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12, and so better termed 'Church governors' as done by the Westminster divines. For them the presbyter's office indicates only the teaching ministry. This was to create a new class of clergy set in contrast to the people, the teachers and the taught, the minister as master rather than as brother, giving rise to John Milton's punning criticism, 'New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large!' Some behaviour suggests that this may still apply.

There indeed is precedent in the history of Israel for a teaching ministry moving in to replace the priestly. Before the Exile it would appear (e.g. Jeremiah 18:18) that the temple priests were also responsible for instruction in the 'law', so that the destruction of the temple and exile in Babylon could only emphasise this aspect of their ministry, to be exemplified in Ezra, priest and scribe. It was this side of Jewish religion, based on the synagogue which developed up to Jesus' time, despite the rebuilding of the Second and Third Temples, and which has continued up to our own day, ministered to by Rabbinic scholar teachers - a title sometimes even given to Jesus in his lifetime.

It is clear too that there was a recognised ministry of teachers in the early Church (Acts 13:1; Rom.12:7; I Cor. 12:28 etc.) though, except for I Tim. 5:17, there is no particular association of this ministry with the office of presbyter-elder. When it came to naming this office, so basic to its regular organisation, the Church no more adopted the accustomed descriptive title Teacher than it did that of Priest. This should suggest that the essential function of the presbyter lay elsewhere.

### **Episcopal Elders and Diaconal Ministers**

It is a question of what really constitutes the Christian Church. Is it primarily, essentially, an agency for providing religious rituals, a juridical authority, an institution for promulgating a doctrinal system, or a fellowship of men and women who are living their lives with their Father-God through Jesus in the Spirit he has given. If the last, then its most representative 'face' is to be found, not in a priestly hierarchy headed by a pope, nor in a set of theologically trained professional teaching ministers, but in the dedicated representative layman or laywoman, the Church elder. I suspect that God, if indeed he is anything like Jesus, is far less interested in what many think of as 'religion', its rituals and dogmatic niceties, than are many of its devotees. Human life from the first was his creation, and more abundant life the purpose of salvation.

The Biblical Presbyter then is primarily the lay elder drawn from the local community rather than a specialist brought in from outside. And he or she is called to be a 'ruling' elder, a supervisor of the Christian life and work of that Christian community to which they themselves belong or where, in Biblical terminology, they have been called and appointed to function as 'bishops'. This is not to suggest that the elders should themselves be trying to provide all the ministerial services which the Christian life and work, worship and witness of the Church requires. There is every need for all our present ministries and more, both full and part time workers for the Church, in their most honourable diaconal services.

Can we get back to such a Church in today's world? An obvious first step would be to build up our present ruling eldership both in status and significance, in character and responsibility. A symbolic move would be to have ruling elders as Moderators of our Church courts, beginning with Kirk Sessions. This might help the public image of the Church as a people's Church rather than the minister's! Ruling elders then might be expected normally to preside at public worship, even if the actual preaching and praying were regularly left with those whose gifts and training for such ministries had been recognised officially through Church ordination. Indeed it would be a prime function of such eldership to try to mobilise the gifts and services of all the members, rather than vainly trying to cover all the field of services themselves. They should not try nor be expected to be 'mini' ministers!

### **But Would this Work?**

Might such an organisation then be practicable and effective? Something like it, some would say, has been followed for centuries by the Quakers or Society of Friends, later by the Brethren, and more recently in the Christian Fellowships or House Church movement. Yet these have tended to remain select sects rather than broad based Churches. And it might be argued that this kind of organisation would be particularly exposed to the dangers of heresy and schism. Even the New Testament Churches were not immune to such stresses, as shown for example in Paul's letters to the Corinthians, John's to the seven Churches in Asia, or when III John 9 speaks of 'Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence'. Again and again strong-willed individuals have arisen to dominate and disrupt Church life, within both the most orthodox Churches and informal Christian fellowships.

Other objections of principle may be raised. There are those for whom Christianity and Church life are essentially things to be received and accepted, as from God who sent us Jesus, so from Jesus through his chain of personal representatives. These are people for whom the Holy Spirit characteristically is transmitted rather than shared in the Church. Others equally hold that it is the Word of God, speaking through the Scriptures and working through



the Holy Spirit, that gives faith; that it is the Word and Spirit which thus constitute the Church and which must rule. Then it is the minister of the Word that should be the key office bearer, providing his authoritative, ordained interpretation and application of that Word.

These may be sincerely held convictions. Yet clergy and ministers would not be human if we did not recognise that personal considerations and vested interest also may cloud our judgement. Even if we were to continue serving the Church much as at present, would we not lose out in prestige, in exercise of power, even maybe financially, if ours became seen only as 'deacon's ministries'? And could the ruling elders, chosen from among the people, really be trusted with the responsibilities and the duties as well as us? Think of the difficulty we so often have in getting suitable people to accept the eldership; so could they afford the time and energy to undertake a larger role? Would they not be handicapped by ignorance or bigotry, by worldliness, or their own local family connections and alliances and vested business or professional interests? As Jesus said, 'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and among his own people!' When Kirk sessions almost ruled the land (or Bishop's courts, or the Inquisition) were not Christian grace and love too often hard to find?

Some doubts might not only trouble ministers but be echoed also by Church members. Would we get as good, as open-minded, open-handed, open-hearted service from such an organisation? How would such a Church stand up in comparison and competition with others? Think of the problems of publicity even for our present Moderators compared with Bishops, etc.! How far, indeed, have we faced the impact of 'professionalism' upon Christian attitudes in general, and on the organisation of Church life and work in particular, when a second or third rate professional can so often achieve more than a gifted 'amateur'.

### **Does it Matter?**

Yet in the end we must also ask how far our controversies on Church government and ministerial order really matter. Also how

far should we still be striving to preserve or to restore the forms these took in previous centuries, or even in New Testament times. For the New Testament itself seems to set us an example of flexibility in these matters, of adaptability to local needs and circumstances, just as it shows a significant lack of that preoccupation with and detailed prescription for the Church's ministry and government, such as have marked Church life in later times, or in the Church of the Old Testament.

If the bottom line, the Biblical test, is to be found in the saying 'By their fruits ye shall know them' what should our verdict be? Christian faith and life has flourished under many forms and arrangements: though whether because of or in spite of these may be debated. Most, if not all of them, have also operated at times to distort, mislead and burden believers. We may debate the relative merits or correctness of our respective systems, their relative success in producing lives which are manifestly related to and revealing of Christ Jesus as Lord and Saviour, but it is hardly possible to argue that any of these, pragmatically considered, is automatically, universally successful, or any of these is automatically, universally a failure. Perhaps these things only matter when people think they matter greatly — and then they usually matter in an adverse way.

A. J. Weir.

## **Sssh! - Silence in Worship**

**Rev. D. J. Templeton**

There followed a silence in heaven for about half an hour.

The first verse of Revelation chapter 8 interrupts the clangour of both the preceding chapters and the final judgements of the following visions with silence. It is not, according to Mounce, the silence of eternal rest which Victorinus suggested in the third century, nor a necessary precaution to enable God to hear the prayers of the suffering saints — although the Talmud does describe the angels who sing continually through the night abstaining from their worship during the day to enable the praises offered by Israel to God to be heard in heaven — rather it performs the function of a dramatic pause creating a divine *coda* after the worship of the saints and before judgement fall on unregenerate earth. The silence is not motionless, however, as it appears that the preparations for judgement carry on in the midst of this quiet.

This divine silence echoes the prophetic injunctions of Habakkuk 2:20, 'The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him,'; Zephaniah 1:7, 'Be silent before the sovereign LORD,' and Zachariah 2:13, 'Be still before the LORD all humanity' where the presence of divinity creates absolute silence. This response of silence thus appears as a sabbath silence from the noise both of praise and judgement in the surrounding chapters.

Therefore we must note that since Revelation 8:1 speaks of silence in heaven as integral during the eschatological worship of God silence must be seen as an essential component of the response to the divine presence in all worship.

We must acknowledge that all worship occurs in the eschatological realm, at the intersection of heaven and earth clearly represented by the ikonostasis of Orthodox worship. This intersection is such that silence is the most appropriate reaction of awe at the presence of God in our midst.



Why then, if silence is a correct response to the divine presence, is it so often lacking in worship? Perhaps it is the magnitude of the reality of God which makes us fear silence. Like Pascal we too cry, 'The eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with dread'.

Perhaps it because we feel the need to fill up silence with words; that worship without words cannot be justified as worship. Worship, however, is not of necessity symbolised only in words. It may also be expressed in silence. As Brother Roger of Taizé has written;

Discover his peace in inner silence. He offers it in all situations, even in the rush and noise of a crowd or in the most demanding work.<sup>1</sup>

Western Society appears to have rejected the interior life, the rich inner life of the individual, replacing it with piped music and eternal television creating a fear of silence or solitude in Western individuals. In addition the silence of the contemplative appears to have become obsolete within Western, and more especially the Reformed tradition. In Western society it is strange for a family gathered together around a meal table to eat in silence, except when an atmosphere of tension and anger exists. Silence is seen in Western Society as negative, as a giving up of the faculty which most clearly defines us as human, that of language. Yet, as Thomas Merton has said:

He who returns into silence does not necessarily hate language. Perhaps it is love and respect for language which impose silence upon him. For the mercy of God is not heard in words unless it is heard, both before and after words are spoken, in silence.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roger of Taizé, *A Heart that Trust*, (London, A.R. Mowbray & Co Ltd, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> Merton, Thomas, *The Monastic Journey*, (New York, Image Books, 1978), p.200.

This constant need for noise and activity, the noise and activity with which we fill our daily lives leeches into our worship, and especially our celebration of the eucharistic feast, yet Revelation 8:1 speaks of silence in heaven during the worship of God, and since our worship occurs within that realm an echo of that silence ought to be present as we celebrate eucharist.

Eucharist is not simply an oasis within a world. It can never be an escape from dealing with life, since it is the confrontation of humanity with God and God with humanity, represented in those who gather for worship, yet it is must also be the one place where activity and language are given meaning by silence and stillness. The Eucharist is an archetypal relationship and as in any other relationship when one is comfortable with the other person one can enjoy the presence of that other in times of quiet. This must also be true of relationship with God.

It is in silence that we love most ardently; noise and words often put out the inner fire.<sup>3</sup>

The sense of silence and healing received in eucharist is not to become, however, a source of spiritual escape from engagement with daily realities, it is to cling to us and spread hope as we, the living eucharist, live in the noise and bustle of the city.

If you have to live in the city and work among machines and ride in the subways and eat in a place where the radio makes you deaf with spurious news and where the food destroys your life and the sentiments of those around you poison your heart with boredom, do not be impatient, but accept it as the love of God and as a seed of solitude planted in your soul... [but] keep your sense of compassion for the men who have forgotten the very concept of solitude.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> De Foucauld, Charles, *Letters from the Desert*, (London, Burns and Oates Ltd, 1977), p.85.

<sup>4</sup> Merton, Thomas, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, (New York, New Directions, 1972), pp. 86/87.

Our silence must be one which enables us to communicate and to give value to each other. It must never become a mute refusal to become involved with other people.

Discretion in peace or gesture has never prevented human contact: only mute silence could cause relationships to break down. That is not required of us because by itself it is not conducive to the true spirit of silence.<sup>5</sup>

Yet the infinite silence of God is not a mute silence, for God is one who communicates, but a pregnant silence.

This dizziness in the face of *les espaces infinis* .... is only overcome if we dare to gaze into them without any protection. And accept them as the reality before which we must justify our existence. For this is the truth we must reach to live, that everything is and we just in it.<sup>6</sup>

It is as we gaze into the silence of God that we are made aware of our own existence in the eternal presence of a living being and that the only possible response is worship. A worship which includes words and actively, silence and stillness, but which also goes beyond either. The symbolic silences of our eucharistic worship must attempt to mirror the infinite mystery of the eucharistic event itself, for we are incapable of explaining the incarnation or the love of God which made it happen, and our only response to such mystery must be silence and awe. This is what is meant by contemplation, it is:

quite simply the attitude whereby our whole being is totally seized by the wonder of a presence. When we understand intellectually the vast reality of the beauty of things, there may be a sense in which that takes hold of us, but only

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<sup>5</sup> Roger of Taizé, *Parable of Community*, (New York, The Seabury Press, 1981), p.23.

<sup>6</sup> Hammarskjöld, Dag, *Markings*, (London, Faber & Faber, 1980), p. 60.



partially. Our whole being, emotions and all, can be entirely caught up in the reality of the love of God.<sup>7</sup>

It is this awareness of the reality of God of which the mystics speak when they talk of mystical union. There is no negation of the personhood of the person who prays. They do not become swallowed up by God, rather they become permanently aware of the eternal presence with them. Similarly the mystics do not seek *kenosis* but seek to remove that which blocks the fullness of divine presence within them. Meister Eckhart describes this like the emptying of a glass of foul liquid that it might be filled with clear water. The glass does not change, only the contents; similarly, for the mystic their self does not alter, but the dynamic of their life does. It is in silence and contemplation that one discovers the turmoil of one's inner life, both corporately and individually. It is like a muddy bowl of water in which one cannot see the mud until it is still. In the silence of eucharist the Church is allowed to be still and to see the need for transformation. It is also an opportunity to see the effects of that transformation already achieved.

The apprehension of the presence of God in worship, especially the worship of Eucharist, should reduce us to silence, even if it only be the silence of half an hour we find in Revelation. Silence must therefore become an integral aspect of worship as we apprehend the presence of God with awe, as indeed the prophets command 'The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.'

D.J.Templeton

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<sup>7</sup> Roger of Taize, *A Heart that Trusts*, (London, A.R. Mowbray & Co Ltd, 1986) p.116.

David Buttrick, *The Mystery and the Passion: A Homiletic Reading of the Gospel Traditions*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1992.

The author of the most entertaining and revolutionary 'how-to' guide to preaching in general has now given us a vivid and profound guide to preaching the resurrection and the passion. *The Mystery and the Passion* expounds the relevant passages in Paul, the Synoptics and John as well as exploring the theology of the cross and the empty tomb. David Buttrick shows a wealth of knowledge of current study in this sphere. It would seem that he has explored almost all the standard works and all the most distinguished authorities. By referring to his copious footnotes the reader will be introduced to the best in recent research, including foundational works like Raymond Brown on John, Norman Perrin on Mark or C. K. Barrett on Paul. The very latest insights of leading scholars and theologians are taken into account. It is indeed rare to find a preacher's commentary which takes the findings of current scholarship so seriously. For example, following Horsley and Hanson, Buttrick notes that there were no proper Zealots until 67-68 CE and therefore the bandits of Jesus's time should be more accurately labelled 'proto-zealots'.

Moreover, as befits someone keen to communicate the gospel in the modern world, Buttrick shows a grasp of modern attitudes. Emile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, W. H. Auden and even DAn Quayle are mentioned among those who mould the world-view of today in the midst of which the preacher must bear witness to Christ. William Blake, Tennessee Williams and Woody Allen are also quoted in this most modern exploration of crucifixion and resurrection theology. Buttrick feels duty-bound to wrestle with the prejudice and the close dminds within the church and outsdie it which may prevent the good news being heard.

Buttrick has made his own translation of the relelvt passages and, as one would expect, his English captures the impact and vividness of the Greek. So we find Jews accusing Jesus in John 19:7 with the words 'he passed himself off as God's son.' Jesus invites Thomas to seek proof of the resurrection with the challenge:

'Take your fist, jam it in my side.' (John 20: 27). In Luke 24:11 the disciples disbelieve the women for 'the words seemed humbug to them.' However, Buttrick's rendering of Son of Man as 'Humanity's Child' in order to avoid sexism may raise a few eyebrows.

Central to Buttrick's understanding of scripture and to his convictions about the gospel of Jesus Christ is his view that the Kingdom of God always has social implications. Therefore, 'God's new order' is to be encountered in the midst of men and women; the kingdom must have an effect on commerce, racism, militarism, politics and all aspects of public morality. Buttrick argues passionately against individualism, whether it stems from conservative theology or from the secular-liberal world of psychotherapy. He claims that both of these schools of thought reduce the gospel of Christ to a flutter in the heart, an inner warmth which need not be outwardly demonstrated. True preaching, according to Buttrick, always recognizes that no man is an island: 'If we preach the peace of the kingdom, will we not bump into America's defense-spending economy? And if we admire justice, will we not collide with the nation's deliberate policy of benign neglect? ... News of a new order is bound to be good news for the poor, the alienated, the ill-adjusted, and the broken people of the earth.'

The proof of the book's worth will be in the number of sermons of quality which it inspires, as preachers benefit from Buttrick's insights into traditional metaphors and stories and are enabled to find contemporary images which link the 'now' of the present time with the 'then' of Calvary. Buttrick's fresh approach will surely persuade ministers that there is far more in these stories than they have previously imagined.

Readers helped by this study of passion and resurrection might then want to tackle Buttrick's *magnum opus*, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, (London, SCM, 1987) which opens up the possibility of effective preaching for modern times using the



insights of the most recent thinking in human communications as well as the best of modern theology.

Denis Campbell

David Noel Freedman (Editor in Chief), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol 1-6, New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Bible Dictionaries are indispensable for succeeding generations of scholars and students, but like commentaries, they must be rewritten for each new generation. Doubleday Publishers and the editor in chief and all the contributors of the Anchor Bible Dictionary have provided a great service to this present generation by producing this magnificent work. It consists of 6 large volumes — some 6 million words — beautifully presented, from the pens of over 1,000 contributors and deals with every relevant topic from Aaron to Zuzim.

A successful Bible Dictionary must do two things: it must encapsulate the store of knowledge already gained and already found, to some extent at least, in previous Bible Dictionaries; it must also, however, carve its distinctive niche in the market, reflecting the interests, discoveries and emphases of the time when it is written. The eighties and nineties (so far) have been decades where interest in sociology has flourished, where narrative criticism has found its feet, where there have been many exciting archaeological discoveries and ever increasing information from older ones (like Qumran and Nag Hammadi), where there has been an evergrowing interest in the Pseudepigrapha and where more and more attempts have been made to place Judaism and Christianity in their historical settings. The Anchor Bible Dictionary has taken all these developments into account and those consulting it will be aware of the contemporary flavour of many of the contributions.

One major difficulty in producing any major dictionary is that of deciding what material to include and what to exclude. The present reviewer, while delighted at the extent of most of the articles (for example, the article on the Pharisees among many

others), was somewhat disappointed that more space could not have been found for some others — there was no specific article on 'reconciliation', for example, and the articles on 'Melchizedek' and even on 'Qumran' were shorter than could have been expected. We would readily admit, however, that in a work of this size, one cannot cater in depth for every favourite topic of every reader, and the Anchor Bible team is to be commended for paying so much attention to those topics which are on the cutting edge of modern biblical research! Perhaps this problem of differing needs and interests among scholars will be solved in the future by the introduction of CD Rom and a licencing agreement, which would allow for more flexibility in the information one buys access to (as well as the opportunity to keep the information constantly up to date). If this technology is adapted, then it is rather startling to think that, as predicted in the Introduction, this will be the last edition of the Anchor Bible Dictionary as we know it!

This is a work to be highly recommended. It must be on the book shelves of every theological library, Biblical scholar and preacher and it should be easily accessible to every student of theology. The present reviewer has found it to be an excellent source of reference for undergraduate courses and, to judge from the number of quotations from it in undergraduate essays, students have found it helpful and stimulating. Though of necessity costing a great deal, it is well worth the investment.

J. C. McCullough

## **The Bicentenary of the Birth of Edward Hincks (1792-1866)**

**Prof. Kevin J. Cathcart**

The 19th August 1992 was the bicentenary of the birth of Edward Hincks, the Irish orientalist who deciphered cuneiform languages such as Akkadian and Urartian. This brilliant scholar also contributed significantly to the elucidation of ancient Egyptian and Old Persian.

Born in Cork and educated at Trinity College Dublin, he spent most of his life as a Church of Ireland pastor in Killyleagh, Co. Down. In this remote parish, he applied his brilliant mind to the study of the languages of the Ancient Near East and with limited resources, published many important articles.

The bicentennial year is being celebrated in Ulster by an exhibition about Edward Hinck's work. It was prepared by Mrs Winifred Glover of the Ulster Museum.

At University College Dublin, the department of Near Eastern Languages organised a series of lectures on the development of various branches of Oriental studies since the time of Hincks. For example, John Ray of Cambridge, lectured on 'Edward Hincks and the Progress of Egyptology'; Peter T. Daniels, Chicago on 'Edward Hincks and the Decipherment of Cuneiform' and John F. Healey, Manchester, on 'The Decipherment of Alphabetic Scripts'. The nine lectures will be published in a volume.

Kevin J. Cathcart  
(U.C.D.)



